



NEWS

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

430 G Street #4164
Davis, California 95616-5475
(530) 792-5644

Contact: Anita K. Brown
State Information Officer
(530) 792-5644

\$11.7 Million to Restore 20 California Wetland Sites in Eight Counties

DAVIS, CA, Feb. 5, 2001-The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in California has identified 20 sites where agricultural land will be restored to a native wetlands condition. The \$11.7 million in easements and restoration work is funded by the federal Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). The 20 sites will add 6,727 new acres of restored wetlands in California to total over 60,000 acres protected by WRP since its inception in 1992.

WRP pays agricultural landowners for easement rights and assists with the restoration needed to convert marginal farmland to ecologically productive wetlands. The program offers permanent and 30-year easements, as well as 10-year restoration contracts.

“Most of our WRP projects are in areas that have marginal agricultural value, due to frequent flooding or poorly-draining soils,” says Jeffrey Vonk, State Conservationist for the NRCS. “These same lands, when restored to wetland status, provide top-notch habitat for migratory birds, plants and animals, plus recreational opportunities such as hiking, hunting, boating and bird watching.”

Vonk added that the lengthy waiting list of over 50,000 acres reflects the clear willingness of California’s farmers and ranchers to respond to a voluntary restoration approach if it couples appropriate incentives with good technical advice.

The 20 sites selected this year are in eight counties: Colusa, Glenn, Kern, Solano, Sonoma, Sutter, Tulare, and Yuba. Among these is the first WRP project in Solano County, where a project restoring and protecting vernal pools that contain threatened and endangered species has been selected.

“We’re also very pleased to add restoration funding to Kern County’s historic Gooselake Bottoms,” said Vonk. In that project a total of 2,760 acres will be protected by combining two years of funds, and efforts of many partners including NRCS, Ducks Unlimited, the Audubon Society and the California Waterfowl Association.

To be considered for WRP, the land must be agricultural and have a high probability of successful restoration, including characteristics such as natural flooding and a potential for habitat diversity.

Additionally, other public and private groups collaborate scientifically and financially to accomplish the restoration work. Key partners in this year’s projects include California Waterfowl Association, Nature Conservancy, Audubon, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Fish and Game, the Wildlife Conservation Board, the Solano County Open Space Conservancy and Ducks Unlimited.

###